

## Commitment to International Understanding Education at a Teacher Education Institution

ITO Harumi

Professor  
Naruto University of Education

### Educational Background

M.A. in TEFL, University of Northern Iowa, U.S.A., 1974  
M.Ed. in Curriculum Studies, Hiroshima University, Japan, 1976  
M.A. in Applied Linguistics, University of Reading, U.K., 1983

### Employment History

April, 1977: English teacher, High School Attached to Hiroshima University  
April, 1985: Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Wakayama University  
April, 1990: Associate professor, Nara University of Education  
October, 2000: Professor, Naruto University of Education

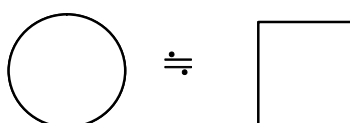
**Degree:** Ph.D. (Hiroshima University)



### Summary

Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University asserted in one of his books that the 21st century would be the century of the clash of civilizations. Now that we witness conflicts between races and religions in different parts of the world, this prediction seems to be validated to a certain degree. More significantly, the present unhappy situation is reminding those engaged in school education of the necessity and urgency with which we are expected to foster among children who are to be active players in the 21st century such attitudes and skills as will be needed to realise on the earth a society in which people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds respect each other. On the basis of this recognition, the presentation will first reexamine the aim of international understanding education and introduce some of the recent measures we have taken at Naruto University of Education in our commitment to international understanding education.

First, concerning the aim of international understanding education, the organizer of this symposium has defined the aim of international understanding education as building the foundation of the attitudes and skills that are to be needed for taking initiatives in the international society from a global perspective. What is the most essential about this definition should be, without doubt, the acquisition of a global perspective. This is because taking initiatives in the international society without a sound global perspective does not necessarily bring about a desired goal but may instead increase the risk of international misunderstanding and conflicts, especially if it is based on narrow-minded nationalism, as was shown by the history of pre-war Japan. The acquisition of a global perspective, however, is not specific enough to substantiate the discussion in the symposium. Here it is redefined as the acquisition of attitudes to recognize each other's *raison d'être* across the barriers of different cultures and languages, getting rid of self-righteous ethnocentrism. The following figure symbolically represents this redefined aim of international understanding education. The point will be illustrated more in details in the presentation.



Redefining as such the desired qualities to be achieved by international understanding education, the presentation will next introduce some of the recent measures we have taken at Naruto University of

Education in our commitment to international understanding education. It goes without saying that qualities desired of children who will be active players in the 21st century are to be desired of those students who are currently studying at teacher education universities. It is necessary for prospective teachers to acquire those qualities at first hand, not simply acknowledging them. It is also necessary for those responsible for educating those prospective teachers to provide them with systematic education in international understanding education.

The current commitment by teacher education institutions, however, is not necessarily systematic. This is mainly because international understanding education does not form an independent field or subject to be taught at schools either in our Course of Study issued by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology or in the regulations specifying the requirements for teaching certificates, although it is well acknowledged that international understanding education is an issue to be pursued across the school curriculum as a whole. It is quite natural, therefore, that there are very few specialists on international understanding education in the faculties of teacher education institutions.

Acknowledging these difficulties surrounding international understanding education, the presentation will describe the current commitment by Naruto University of Education both on an institution level, focusing on its international programmes, and on a personal level, focusing on initiatives taken in terms of English language education. This will be followed by the presentations of problems to be solved with a view to substantiating the discussion at the symposium.